

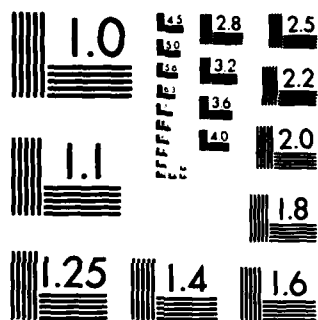
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THE IMPACT OF ASVAB TESTING ON ARNG ACCESSIONS

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL JERRY D. SIMMONS
ARMY NATIONAL GUARD, FIELD ARTILLERY

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<p>Over the past few years, the Army National Guard has been in the process of converting to the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery to test non-prior service applicants. During the same period of time, the number of non-prior service accessions has decreased.</p> <p>This study is an attempt to determine if the conversion to the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery is the reason for the decrease in non-prior service</p>		

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The study concludes with a series of recommendations to assist the Army National Guard in making the conversion and in meeting their manpower goals.

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM

THE IMPACT OF ASVAB TESTING ON ARNG ACCESSIONS

INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Lieutenant Colonel Jerry D. Simmons
Army National Guard, Field Artillery

US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
7 May 1984

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR(S): Jerry D. Simmons, LTC, ARNG, FA

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→ Over the past few years the Army National Guard (APNG) has been in the process of converting to the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) to test non-prior service applicants. During the same period of time, the number of non-prior service accessions has decreased.

This study is an attempt to determine if the conversion to the ASVAB ~~Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery~~ is the reason for the decrease in non-prior service accessions and, if so, to then identify why the conversion is causing the decrease.

The study concludes with a series of recommendations to assist the ARNG Army National Guard in making the conversion and in meeting their manpower goals. . . .

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The role of the Army National Guard (ARNG) in the Total Army Force has changed substantially over the past few years. These changes reflect the increased reliance on the ARNG to insure the success of US military strategy. Modern equipment has been distributed to the ARNG and increasing amounts are planned for distribution in the future.

The Chief of Staff of the Army, General John A. Wickham, Jr., testified before the House Armed Services Committee that "\$900 million in new equipment is being issued to the Guard and Reserve in FY 84 and \$1.4 billion in new equipment will be issued in FY 85." He also said:

In view of the Active Army's size, improving the readiness of the National Guard and Reserve units must be a top priority.¹

There has been a significant increase in the force structure of the ARNG since FY 79. The ARNG attained a modern day record strength of 417,000 at the end of September 1983. The Guard is also programmed to attain an end strength of 433,000 in FY 84 and 447,000 in FY 85. The currently stated requirement is for the ARNG to reach a strength of 499,400 by FY 89.²

Building on strength gains made each year since FY 79, the ARNG has continued to pursue its aggressive program for increasing strength, concurrent with the expansion of the ARNG structure. However, an improved economy and a decreased manpower pool of 18-21 year-olds (9.6 million in 1985, down from 10.8 million in 1979)³ will translate into a tougher recruiting climate.

Since October 1982, there has been a decrease in the number of Non-Prior Service (NPS) accessions. The strength of the Army Guard was 417,000 in September 1983, but by December 1983, it had dropped to 413,000, down 4,000 in one quarter of the fiscal year.

In August 1982, the Department of the Army (DA) directed that, effective 1 October 1983, the ARNG would only use the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) to qualify applicants for enlistment into the ARNG.⁴ There are some indications that a subsequent increase in the number of applicants taking the ASVAB has caused the decrease in NPS accessions.

BACKGROUND

Over the past several years the ARNG has primarily used the Army Classification Battery (ACB) to qualify applicants for accession. The ARNG administers the ACB, as needed, at each ARNG armory. The ASVAB is administered by the United States Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) at Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS) and at Mobile Examining Test (MET) sites. The MEPS is a jointly staffed facility charged with applicant testing, medical examination and administrative processing of applicants for the Armed Forces.

Since 1976 the ARNG has been encouraged to utilize the ASVAB and to move towards full processing at the MEPS to the maximum extent possible.⁵ Until about 1980 the ARNG used the MEPS facilities, to include MET sites, to a limited degree. The utilization was primarily for physical examinations.

By 1982 utilization of the MEPS by the ARNG had increased a significant amount, but by this time, utilization was more for ASVAB testing than for physicals.

The amount of MEPS utilization by the ARNG varied from state to state. At least one state, California, was using the MEPS for full processing (ASVAB testing, medical examinations and administrative processing) of all of their NPS applicants.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was to determine, if the decrease in ARNG non-prior service accessions was caused by the directive to test all NPS applicants with the ASVAB. If the primary reason for the decrease in NPS accessions was the conversion to ASVAB testing, to then identify why the conversion is causing the decrease.

INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES

A brief historical search was performed and a comparison was made of the number of ARNG non-prior service accessions and the number of ASVAB tests administered to ARNG applicants since October 1981.

Interviews were conducted to gain a current insight into ARNG recruiting and the amount of ASVAB testing of applicants in various states. Agencies whose representatives consented to interviews included: several state National Guard Headquarters; Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (ODCSPER), Headquarters Department of the Army (HQDA), Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) and the National Guard Bureau (NGB).

After the comparison of ASVAB testing and NPS accessions, a conclusion was formed along with recommendations for resolving the problem.

CHAPTER I

ENDNOTES

1. Washington Tie-Line, National Guard, April 1984. p. 2.
2. Francis S. Greenlief, MG (Ret), "Why the GI Bill is Essential By 1989." National Guard. April 1984, p. 5
3. "Red Book Review, Top Priority: GI Bill", National Guard. April 1984, pp. 20-22.
4. William O. Clark, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (Manpower and Reserve Affairs). Memorandum For Director of the Army Staff. 18 August 1981. SUBJECT: Army Enlisted Accession Qualification.
5. William K. Brehn, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs). Memorandum For Assistant Secretaries of The Military Departments (Manpower and Reserve Affairs). 22 December 1975. SUBJECT: ASVAB Testing and AFEES Processing for the Guard and Reserve.

CHAPTER II

ENTRANCE INTO MILITARY SERVICE

The induction of an individual into military service consist of three distinct parts: aptitude or mental testing, medical qualification and administrative processing.¹

APTITUDE QUALIFICATIONS WITH THE ACB

The ACB has been used by the ARNG to qualify applicants for entrance into the ARNG for a number of years. A specific part of the ACB comprises the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT), which determines eligibility for military service. The remainder of the ACB is used to determine MOS producing training aptitude requirements.

The unit administrator at each armory usually has the responsibility for administering the ACB to applicants. Since there are approximately 3,000 armories throughout the nation, there are approximately 3,000 test sites at which the ACB can be administered. In addition, the unit administrator, being a full time technician for the ARNG, is available to administer the test at any time during the week and on some week ends. Since the test administrator scores the test, test scores are available immediately upon completion of the test.

APTITUDE QUALIFICATIONS WITH THE ASVAB

The ASVAB is the most widely used means of qualifying applicants for military service. As with the ACB, a specific portion of the ASVAB

comprises the (AFQT) and the remainder of the test is used to qualify the applicant for MOS selection.

In addition to the regular or production version of the ASVAB, MEPCOM administers the test in an institutional version to consenting high schools and technical schools as an aid in counseling and as a means of gaining access to the school for service recruiters. The institutional test serves as a qualifier for military service and the score remains valid for up to two years.²

The ASVAB is currently administered by either MEPCOM military personnel or Office of Personnel Management (OPM) testers. Testing at MET sites is usually performed by OPM testers. The OPM testers are paid on the basis of a test session fee.

The ASVAB is administered either at the MEPS or at the MET sites at a frequency determined by local conditions. There are 70 MEPS and approximately 900 MET sites located throughout the nation. The frequency of test sessions as well as the locations of the MET sites, is determined by the local MEPS commander and the local recruiting services via the Interservice Recruitment Committee (IRC). Each recruiting service member (army, navy, airforce, marines) has one vote, with the MEPS commander having veto power regarding the commitment of resources. The ARNG is encouraged to participate in the IRC but is not a voting member.³

CHAPTER II

ENDNOTES

1. US Military Entrance Processing Command. Military Entrance Processing Handbook. Chapters 6, 14 and 16.
2. US Department of The Army. Army Regulations 601-270: Military Entrance Processing Stations. Chapter 7.
3. Ibid., Chapter 3.

CHAPTER III

ASVAB TESTING AND ACCESSION RATES

It is apparent by looking at the tables on pages 9-11 that while there has been an increase in ASVAB testing of ARNG applicants, there has been a decrease in the number of NPS accessions. It should be mentioned at this point that, although the number of NPS accessions has decreased, the total accessions for the ARNG has increased. This was accomplished through an increase in the number of prior service accessions. It has been suggested that many recruiters have targeted prior service personnel, rather than non-prior service, because a test is usually not required for the prior service applicant.

ADVANTAGES OF USING THE ASVAB

There are advantages associated with using the ASVAB to qualify ARNG applicants. Currently the active army and the United States Army Reserve (USAR) require all applicants to take the ASVAB under the auspices of MEPCOM.¹ Qualifying all ARNG applicants with the ASVAB will establish a single standard of aptitude testing for the Total Army. Using the MEPS to the fullest extent possible can significantly reduce workload and costs at organizational level in accessing new applicants into the ARNG.

Even though there are advantages to using the ASVAB, there are a number of obstacles that have been identified by the States and NGB.

**NSP ACCESSIONS OF THE ARNG
AND ASVAB TESTING OF ARNG APPLICANTS
FY 82-FY 84**

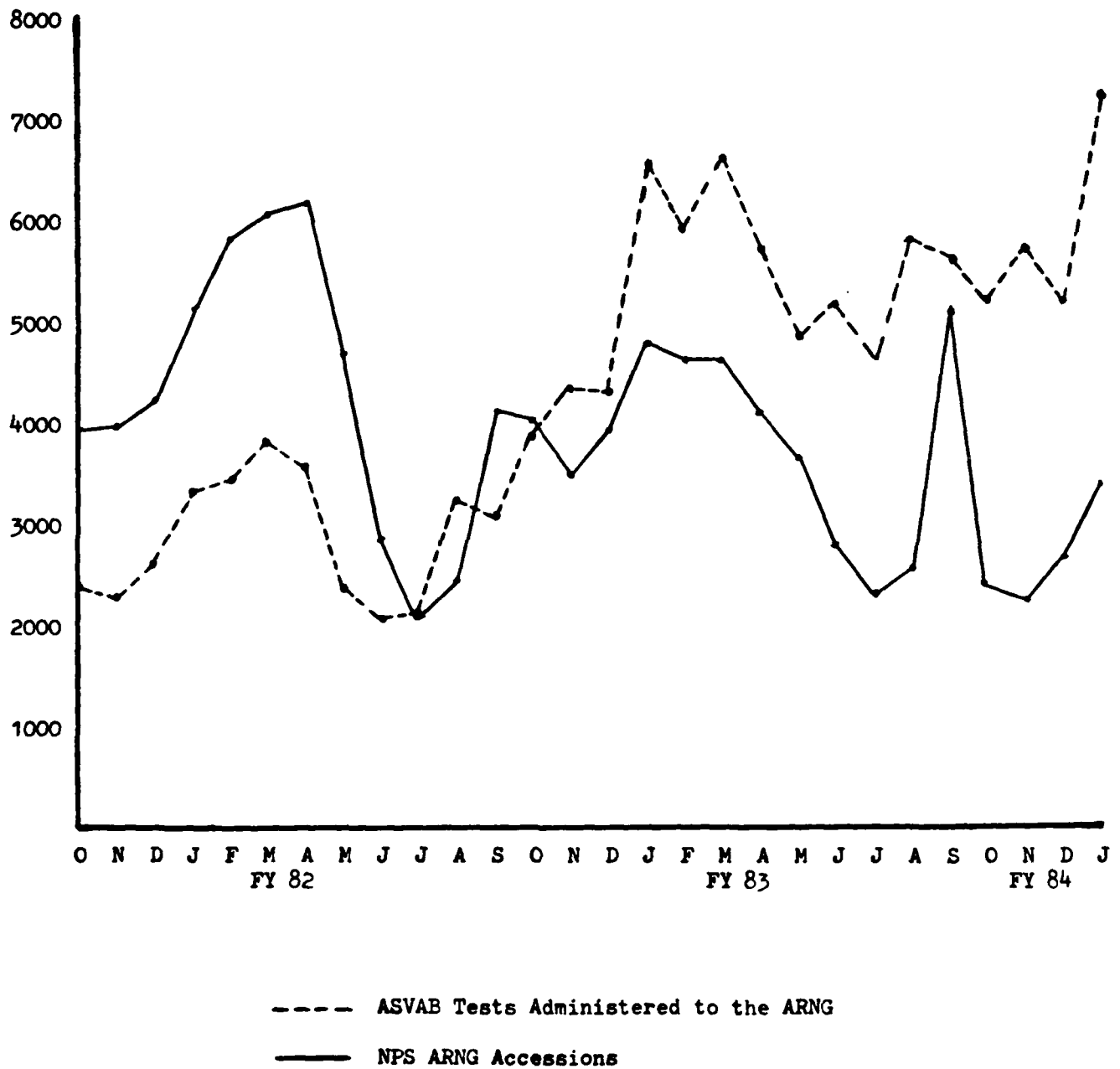
	FY 82		FY 83		FY 84	
<u>Month</u>	<u>ASVABs Adminis- tered To ARNG</u>	<u>ARNG NPS Accessions</u>	<u>ASVABs Adminis- tered To ARNG</u>	<u>ARNG NPS Accessions</u>	<u>ASVABs Adminis- tered To ARNG</u>	<u>ARNG NPS Accessions</u>
Oct	2377	3966	3844	4005	5206	2380
Nov	2288	3955	4330	3473	5756	2208
Dec	2595	4176	4288	3908	5201	2685
Jan	3263	5109	6602	4737	7030	3349
Oct-Jan (Sub Totals)	(10,523)	(17,206)	(19,064)	(16,123)	(23,193)	(10,622)
Feb	3490	5849	5929	4594		
Mar	3830	6136	6654	4596		
Apr	3557	6218	5746	4050		
May	2371	4626	4856	3651		
Jun	2053	2888	5183	2777		
Jul	2198	2150	4545	2254		
Aug	3200	2468	5831	2522		
Sep	3067	4108	5607	5042		
	—	—	—	—		
FY Totals	34,289	51,649	63,415	45,609		

Source of Information: ASVAB Test Information - MEPCOM
ARNG Accession Information - NGB

NPS ACCESSIONS OF THE ARNG
AND ASVAB TESTING OF ARNG APPLICANTS

	<u>ASVAB TESTS</u> <u>Adm. To ARNG</u>	<u>ARNG</u> <u>NPS Accessions</u>
1 Oct 81-31 Jan 82	10,523	17,206
1 Oct 82-31 Jan 83	19,064	16,123
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Increased(+) or Decreased(-)	+8,541 (81.2%)	-1,083 (6.2%)
 1 Oct 82-31 Jan 83	 19,064	 16,123
1 Oct 83-31 Jan 84	23,193	10,622
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Increased(+) or Decreased(-)	+4,129 (21.7%)	-5,501 (34.2%)

NPS ACCESSIONS OF THE ARNG AND ASVAB TESTING



LOCATION OF TEST SITES

In many areas of the nation, the travel time required to take the ASVAB is much greater than that required to take the ACB.

Test sites in the more populated areas of the US are usually within a 25 to 30 mile radius with the test sessions as frequent as 3 or 4 times weekly. However, in areas that are sparsely populated, test sites may be as far away as 50 miles with test sessions as infrequent as once per month.

There are approximately 970 ASVAB test sites as compared to approximately 3,000 ACB test sites.

Public transportation is not available in much of the nation for an applicant to travel to and from the MEPS or MET site. Therefore, it is usually necessary for the recruiter to transport the applicant to and from the test site. Even if public transportation is available, recruiters usually transport the applicants to be assured that they get there on time.

Recruiters use the Enlistment Screening Test (EST) to screen out applicants that have a low probability of qualifying on the ASVAB. However, only about one third of the applicants that take the ASVAB will qualify mentally and physically and also meet all administrative requirements.

Transporting an applicant a greater distance to a test site is an additional burden on the ARNG recruiter. This takes away from time that could be spent on recruiting and also incurs greater transportation costs. The size of the ARNG recruiting force was based on applicants

taking the aptitude test at local armories. Recruiters have a difficult time making mission when they must transport applicants to locations outside of armories, wait extended periods for testing to be accomplished and then return applicants to their homes or armories.

FREQUENCY OF TESTING SESSIONS

The frequency of test sessions at MET sites vary from two or more times weekly to once per month. The ARNG has many units in rural areas and in those areas, test sessions are usually no more than two times per month.

It is the policy at MEPCOM to open new MET sites or add test sessions if there are sufficient applicants to justify it.² However, it is difficult in some areas to have enough applicants to justify additional test sites or additional test sessions.

CONCERNS OF OTHER SERVICES

MEPCOM has consistently indicated that they can support ASVAB testing of the ARNG without additional resources. MEPCOM has also indicated that they will insure that all MEPS personnel are sensitive to the ARNG needs and will insure that Red Carpet policy pertains to all applicants.

However, there has been some concern among the other services, including the active army, that increased ARNG testing will reduce the test seat allocation for their respective service. While it is true that the ARNG test seat allocation must come from the other services, in most test sessions, there are test seats that are not utilized. In those areas where the test sessions are filled to the maximum, steps

have been taken to either increase the number of test seats available or increase the number of sessions.

CONVERSION TO A DIFFERENT SYSTEM

The National Guard Bureau has provided broad guidance to the 54 ARNG jurisdictions concerning ASVAB testing of ARNG applicants. Several states are using the ASVAB with 80% or more of their applicants, however among the ARNG as a whole there has been variance in the progress and timing planned to achieve the goal of 100% ASVAB testing.

Most changes to new systems involve a learning period for all personnel concerned. The conversion to ASVAB testing of ARNG applicants has been no exception, ARNG recruiters are becoming familiar with MEPCOM policies and MEPS personnel as well as the other services are becoming familiar with the requirements of the ARNG.

Through close coordination between MEPS personnel, local recruiting services and the ARNG, many initial problems have now been resolved.

CHAPTER III

ENDNOTES

1. US Department of the Army. Army Regulations 601-270:
Military Entrance Processing Stations. Chapter 2.
2. US Military Entrance Processing Command. Military Entrance
Processing Handbook. Chapter 12.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recognized that variables other than ASVAB testing may have had an effect on NPS accessions. Possibly the decrease in NPS accessions is a result of an improved economy or it may be that the ARNG has been trying to improve the quality of their accessions and chose to access only applicants that scored in higher categories.

CONCLUSIONS

The conversion to ASVAB testing of ARNG applicants has impacted on NPS accessions. The improved economy may be having some effect on NPS accessions, but it appears from the information compiled in this study, that the major cause is the conversion to ASVAB testing.

The reason that the conversion is causing a decrease in NPS accessions is the additional time that it takes for recruiters to transport applicants to test sites outside of armories, wait extended periods for testing to be accomplished and then return applicants to their homes or armories.

The ACB is available at the local armories, and it can be administered any time of the day or any day of the week. The ASVAB is only available at a MET site and only at predesignated times.

FY 83 appears to be the year in which there was the greatest increase in ASVAB testing and the greatest decrease in NPS accessions. During FY 83 the other services had a great recruiting year with apparently no impact from the improved economy.

There are some indications that an effort was made in the ARNG to improve the quality of NPS accessions. Some states limited the number of category IV applicants that could be accessed. However, this emphasis on quality did not seem to have a major impact on total NPS accessions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of the "top priority" of increasing the force structure of the ARNG, every possible action must be considered to insure that the ARNG will be able to meet established strength goals.

- o Additional resources should be provided to the ARNG to expand the recruiting force and pay for increased transportation costs.
- o Exception to ASVAB testing policy should be made for remote ARNG units. The exception should apply to units for which ASVAB testing would be impractical and inappropriate considering the distance to testing sites and the number of applicants to be tested. However, specific parameters should be established to identify remote units. For example exception could be made for units that are more than 30 miles or 45 minutes from a test site.
- o Funds should be provided for MEPCOM to expand the number of MET sites. There should be a MET site within 30 miles of every armory with a test session at least weekly. These additional MET sites would be used by the other services as well as the ARNG. This would save on transportation costs and would offset some of the additional costs of establishing more MET sites.

- o ARNG applicants should, to the maximum extent feasible, also be medically examined and administratively processed at the MEPS.

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